THREE DAYS.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

"THE MOON HAD GROWN SOFT AND PALE."

Frontispiece.

THREE DAYS.

A MIDSUMMER LOVE-STORY.

BY

SAMUEL WILLIAMS COOPER.

"I have broken the faith; I have fled from the fight;
for the rest——"

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THREE DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT IS YON GENTLEMAN?"

"'Where shall we land?' God's grace,
I know not any place
So fair as this,—
Swung here between the blue
Of sea and sky, with you
To ask me, with a kiss,—
'Where shall we land?'"

A YOUNG man strolled into the hall-way of the Hotel Gladstone, and, after a few words with the clerk, wrote his name upon the register,—

"Morris Ashton, New York."

There was the usual after-supper chatter going on among the guests, which the entrance of the stranger somewhat interrupted, for the luggage, carried by the porter, showed him to be a new arrival, and the maidens, even at this fashionable watering-place, seriously considering the problem of where the men were, became at once anxious to know about him, and to learn how long he might stay.

They saw that he was tall and had a long muscular stride, which was not changed because he was entering a crowded hall where many eyes were on him,—the possessors, in several instances, women of great beauty. They noticed, too, that his face was sunburnt, his hair and heavy moustache dark brown, his nose large and straight, and his clothes of rough Scotch tweed, the proper cut.

And then, when he said to the clerk, in a strong, pleasant voice, but with a trace of

worldly drawl about it, "Can you tell me whether Colonel Franklin McAlpin is about?" both maidens and mammas were satisfied that this man was "altogether charming," for they knew he must be the friend the colonel had told them was coming down to stay with him for several weeks.

Colonel McAlpin had spoken, in his halting way, first to Margaret Lee about him.

"You will be.... sure to love him," he said. "He is called a handsome man, and has more brains and manners than.... all the rest of them put together."

Miss Lee had scoffed at the idea of caring, while inwardly determining that if Mr. Ashton proved to be anything like the description given, he should have full opportunity to explain to her his views on many questions of interest.

Now, as he passed under her critical examination, she was almost convinced that

she should find in him at least something to amuse an idle hour.

She was seated not far from the office, and watched him meet his friend.

"Well," said the colonel, "how are you? Glad to see you.... when did you come? Why.... why didn't you write to me and tell me about it?" He spoke without a stutter, but with an odd halt in his voice, especially noticeable when he was most interested.

"I had to stop in Boston on business, and did not know how soon I could manage it," Morris Ashton replied.

"Has your.... trunk arrived. Come up .... up.... stairs, and change your linen. We will order some supper for you now: I know you have had nothing. Lots of nice.... girls here, my dear fellow; you will enjoy it.... immensely."

And then they went down the hall, Colonel McAlpin clutching his friend's arm, as

he talked to him in his odd, excited way of what was in store for him.

As they turned away, Morris Ashton glanced over the people in the hall.

"What nice eyes he has!" Margaret Lee thought to herself; "so fierce and yet soft." They seemed to linger for a moment on her face;—not the least offence or lack of respect in them, only the fearlessness that women love, whether it comes naturally or as the result of training. She was familiar with men's eyes, and their ways, and was doubtful in this instance from what source the bravery came. "He must be over thirty, I know," she said to her friend, Jessie Brooks; "his eyes prove it."

The colonel accompanied his friend upstairs, and sat on the bed while Ashton made the necessary changes in his toilet.

Franklin McAlpin was perhaps forty years old, though he did not look thirty, and was both a lover and a cynic in regard

to watering-places. He swore regularly each spring that he hated the very sight of them and their frequenters, yet he was always at the most fashionable, and stayed to the end of the season, merely, it seemed, to find fault with the place, the hotels, the fare, and, above all, the women.

A friendship had grown up between the two men, the origin of which they might have been at a loss to account for had they troubled their minds to inquire. Many friendships are so, but, perhaps, in this instance, the reason of its continuance was because of the oppositeness of their characters.

The colonel was nervous and excitable, with social position and wealth enough to indulge his peculiarities to their utmost limit; indeed, society suffered from his open criticisms and behavior to an extent which it persistently refused to notice. Morris Ashton, on the other hand, was

known, principally, for his absolute accuracy of manner, speech, and dress; not, however, that he was either a fop or a fool, for he stood a test which placed him above that.

He was a man who, if not entitled to be called successful in business, yet held his own as a member of the bar, and was one of whom men spoke well and women loved. His income barely enabled him, by economy, to support himself in "that station of life in which it had pleased God to call him," and so he was never loath to accept the colonel's invitations to stay with him, at his house in town or at an hotel, when he chanced to be there. Perhaps he admired Colonel McAlpin because he was able to treat society as he liked; while the colonel, besides his genuine liking for Ashton, was glad to have for his guest one who behaved towards the world in the way he knew he himself should have done.

It was one of Colonel McAlpin's hobbies that his friend should marry money, and he was persistently on the lookout for a good match for him,—like a widow whose one daughter has passed the point in life where her age may be told.

They had not seen each other for several months, and had many things to talk over, —it would not be correct to speak of confidences between them. However, the colonel was telling Ashton about his last love-affair.

"You know," he said, "when I saw you last I.... was said to be engaged to Peter Phillips's youngest daughter. Well, in fact, for a time, we did have a certain sort of.... understanding: she gave me her.... picture, and in return received a handful of those old family rings I carry about with me. But, I tell you.... when it came to going to see her every night, and taking her to the plays, and balls, and all that.... endless round

of the whirligig, I.... couldn't stand it ....I swear I could not. I would sometimes feel like saying to her—Get out.... let me alone; why do you bother me so?"

All this in such a quizzical, half-serious way, that Ashton, though seldom moved by humor, laughed aloud.

"How many does that make?" he asked. "Do you keep count of them?"

"Never," the colonel answered; "but they dog my footsteps always....I even sleep armed to the teeth. You remember that fat girl I was so....fond of at Bar Harbor last summer: I swear I thought she and her big brother were after me.... last night, and I roamed about these rooms for several hours with that gun....waiting for them."

"Have you any affair of that kind on hand up here?" Ashton said.

"Not one," the colonel answered; "my last experience was quite enough for me;

but for you, my dear fellow, I have selected something fine .... beautiful, rich, and witty."

"That bright-eyed, dashing-looking girl who sat by the wall, near the office, as I came in?"

"There! fate has backed me up at last, by gad, for you have named her,—Margaret Lee, of Boston."

"How much is she worth?" Ashton queried, presently.

"A clear million, I believe; certainly, if you .... discount rumor, you will be safe in .... saying half of that sum."

"Well, I might exist on that, I suppose. Come, let us go down, and meet her at once. Who else is here?"

"Girls, of course! One of the prettiest is Jessie Brooks, a giddy little New York belle; then there is Mrs. Van Guilt, the yellow-haired widow .... whom you met here last summer and——"

"Come, I'm ready; let's go down to supper, and you can tell me all about it there."

Margaret Lee was still in her position of vantage in the hall-way, and was "only too happy to meet Mr. Ashton."

There were the usual commonplaces.

"The colonel has told me so much about you, Mr. Ashton."

"If it was pleasant, I sincerely hope that I deserve it. I need not say that I have known of you before: I have done more,—I have seen you."

"When? Oh, you mean just now."

"And after seeing you, I need no one to praise you to me."

"You don't read minds, do you? And you cannot surely tell by looking at me whether I am really clever?"

"Not by looking at you, but by looking into the windows of your heart; they are so deep, no one could see into them once and not want to come back again."

"May they not look deep and yet be silent?"

"To some, perhaps, who are blind to see in; and to others, who cannot because they may not."

"Do you prevent them from reading yours?" she queried, looking at him curiously. It interested her to hear his compliments,—easy and forceful even on such short acquaintance.

"Perhaps; but they cannot prevent me from knowing when I so desire."

He was standing looking down, her face turned up to his, and he flashed a glance into her eyes so powerful she needs must turn away.

"How long have you been here?" he asked, changing the subject.

"For about a month. I am to leave next week for Newport; but who can tell?"

"Has it been nice?"

"Yes, rather; it will be perfect now, I

think." And she glanced at him, rather too coquettishly, he thought, for a girl with such dignity of beauty.

"I am sure it will for me," he said, slowly, "if you treat me well; we are so much the slaves of our surroundings and friendships, you know."

"I should not think you would be, if what we hear is true: you who have so many resources within yourself to fall back upon."

"Which means, really," he said, laughing, "that I am never violent, and always harmless; and that I can amuse myself longer than most patients in blindly beating the air with my hands and laughing to myself."

And then the hateful colonel dragged him off to supper, and she kept her engagement to go to the Casino with Dr. Braman. He blamed her for being distraite, and she pleaded a headache. In truth, a low, firm voice still rang in her ears, and she was

thinking of brown eyes that would not be cowed, even before her searching glance.

Was he on guard against her, or was he stony and impenetrable? He was surely worth conquering; many a better man than he had presumed to defy her and regretted it sorely ever afterwards.

"He shall see."

CHAPTER II.

"CHASTE DIAN BATHING."

"Bright Sea, far flooding all the pebbled sand,
Flinging thy foamy pearls from stone to stone,
Thy lullaby, low murmured to the strand,
Sounds like a lover's tone;
And yet I know, elsewhere,
Some other shore as fair
Thy waves have kissed and left it dry and lone."

ASHTON was disappointed at finding Margaret Lee gone when he came from the supper-room; but he met some old friends among the guests at the house, and was presented to a number of people, all animated by that ferocious desire to be entertaining especially characteristic of watering-place hotels. He then strolled down to the Casino and had a bottle of wine with two New York men, talked over all the current

scandals of the place, and was back at the hotel before midnight.

As he stood chatting in the hall, a girl came in from the piazza, talking gayly with a youth of the kind most prevalent in summer-time at the sea-side.

"Pretty girl,—I'd like to meet her," Ashton said; and afterwards stood by the stairway talking to her. She was two steps above him and then only looked straight into his eyes, with that lack of shyness born of occasions more than her years would warrant.

"I know I shall not like you," she said.

"Why not?" most seriously.

"Don't think me fresh, will you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, because you are too old for my use, and your coat fits you too well, and you do not know how to laugh."

She leaned over the banister and smiled her insulting speech at him as if she had

been his sweetheart bidding him good-night.

He hated this style of girl, usually; yet, with a trifle of disgust in his heart, he was compelled to admit the great beauty of the specimen before him. "Such a lithe girlish figure, and nice fluffy hair," he thought; "not a bad sort of girl for summer, but poor form."

"Good-night, Miss Brooks; you will like me better when I bid you good-bye instead of good-night."

For answer, she gave her hand, and, with a shake of her head and a careless laugh, ran lightly up the steps.

Ashton and Margaret Lee had a game of tennis the next morning.

She had a wonderfully accurate and difficult overhand serve, and Ashton, who had, of late, played very little, was beaten by her several times.

He was a man who did most things well

which required exertion of will, often winning at games in which he was unpractised, simply, it seemed, by the force of his determination. He fenced, boxed, shot, and rowed well, and by exercise in the gymnasium kept his muscles hard and his body strong and healthy.

Her victories over him nettled him somewhat; he would rather have felt that he had allowed her to win; and he had that feeling in his heart that she was too masculine,—what man has not on such occasions?

She was much too observant not to have noticed that she had won without his leave, and secretly rejoiced over the fact. "At least I am his match here," she thought.

"You play an awfully good game," he said, as they sat in the shade, after the rubber was over; "one of the best I ever saw. You see I do not have much chance at it myself. I really believe you let me beat you, just to keep the interest up."

"'YOU PLAY AN AWFULLY GOOD GAME,' HE SAID."

"There goes Mrs. Van Guilt down for her bath; I think we had better follow," she interrupted. "When she turns out all the fashion must be there."

On reaching the beach, Ashton was soon ready for his bath, and while awaiting Margaret Lee's appearance was struck with the brightness of the scene, gay with striped sun-tents and many-colored parasols; pretty girls "who could not endure bathing-suits, and hated the ocean," hence laying themselves open to anatomical criticisms from both sexes, lounged lazily in the hammocks beneath their shade.

Mrs. Van Guilt came forth in a close-fitting suit of white flannel, which showed to more than advantage the beauties of her figure; she wore a dainty bonnet, trimmed with roses, suitable for an afternoon tea rather than the careless arms of the ocean. But as the extent of her bathing was in dabbling her embroidered feet in the

water, the sea had no possible chance for any undesired familiarity.

"I wish you would come and bathe me," she said to Henry Brooks, with an admiring glance at his muscular arms; "you are the only man I feel safe in going out with."

"So awfully sorry, but I have another engagement," he replied.

"Oh, you are much too popular,"—an attempt at pleasant sarcasm.

Jessie Brooks, lying on the sand with Frederick Harcourt, a young Englishman, with delightful manners and a preconceived drawl, called to Ashton,—

"Don't stand there so solemnly; why don't you go in the water? It may liven you up."

"Still chaffing, are you," turning to her. "You bathe well, I fancy; I'm sure you can have no trouble in floating."

"Now, if I ask you why, you will say it is because I am so light, then I shall be com-

pelled to say some vulgar slang which you, of course, would not understand."

With a red tennis-cap, tightly fixed over her ashen hair, and her straight figure, she was almost like a boy, and yet there was a womanly winsomeness about her, with a childish grace of movement pretty to see.

"I will tell you some time why I do not laugh; meanwhile, will you not think I have serious reasons and pity me?" he said, as she turned away.

"You are not serious at all," she answered; "you only pretend: I see it in your face. Good-bye; I must go down to the sea; I will meet you there later."

This girl's impertinence jarred on him. What did she know about the serious side of life that she criticised him in this way? Who dared say he was not in earnest in all that he said and did? Pshaw, little chatterbox!

His meditations were broken by the voice of Margaret Lee at his side.

"Do you know I have been watching you for quite two minutes, but couldn't make you look; I think it must be nonsense about mesmeric influences and all that."

She had been thinking what deep-set eyes were his, and how dreamily the long lashes drooped over them, and what dark eyebrows were there. He was much too abstracted, though, and needed rousing.

She looked tall and striking in her bathing-suit; but Ashton, who had been worrying himself to find out what it was in the beauty of her body that he did not like, came now to know that it was because she was too muscular. She lacked the fulness and softness without which a woman is never entirely adorable. There was nothing on her hair, which was brushed back from her face and fixed in a tight brown knot. Her eyes were of the darkest blue,

and command was in every look and motion.

"She is spoiled by being too aggressively beautiful," was his thought.

"Let us take a short run down the beach before going in," she said. "Come, I will beat you." And when they slackened into a walk, they found themselves a long way from the bathers, and Margaret Lee as little out of breath as Ashton.

"How long will you stay here?" she said, while he was wondering whether she could spar and fence as gracefully as she ran.

"As long as you make it pleasant for me, I think." And then he fell again to speculating whether she could pull a boat ten miles out to sea with her muscular arms.

"I wonder if I can call her "horsey" to express my feelings," he thought to himself; but he came to the conclusion that this was too violent a term for her; perhaps its suggestiveness, however, caused him to say,—

"Is there much driving about here?"

"Not very much," she replied. "I have my horses, but use them more to exercise them than for any enjoyment of the thing."

"I hope you will sometimes take me out with you," he said.

He lost her reply, in thinking that one who kept her stable here must be well fixed.

They did not hurry on their return, and he made the best of his opportunity. He tried to interest her in his work, and told her what he hoped for the future; of his ambitions; and then of his trials,—the sorrows that hurt him and yet were so trifling,—most of them coming from lack of means; and how, in time, he believed he would conquer them all and stand forth with the wreath of success on his brow.

He had a wonderfully earnest way when he chose, and Margaret Lee was deeply interested.

"I wish I could help you," she said.

"Considering that I am manufacturing all this sympathy, it works very well," he thought; and then, with a weariness that was not altogether assumed;—"Emerson says we must not try to live above our destiny, but it is so hard to tell what our destiny is. Logically, that seems the doctrine of *lassez-faire;* and yet who is contented when ambition is beating at his heart? The image we see in the sunlight is always just ahead, and it is not until our footsteps falter with the weariness of age that we discover it is not our own statue, crowned with bays, but only the ghastly skull of death, who smiles as he points to an open grave. There! you have driven me to moralizing, and it is summer-time, and we are to go bathing, and our only thought should be of the joys of the day."

Margaret Lee was vaguely wondering of the manner of man this was, who passed in

the world of society almost as a fop, yet seemed to have sounded the shoals, if not the depths, of philosophy.

She was a delightful girl in the water: fearless and an excellent swimmer, with none of the troublesome ways that women are apt to display. They swam out to a raft which was moored about a hundred yards from the shore and amused themselves in trying to outdive each other. Margaret Lee could turn a backward summersault with the carelessness of a mermaid.

Catharine Forbes swam out to them with young Brooks to ask Margaret for some points on diving. She seemed a little shy in her efforts at first; she did not strike Ashton as being particularly attractive, and he turned and was watching an exhibition of over-arm racing between Brooks and Harcourt. After a little while he heard her dive from the side of the raft back of him, and, a moment

afterwards, on looking around, he could see her nowhere. "Surely," he thought, "she cannot have returned to the shore in so short a time,—and she would not go without Brooks in any case."

He sprang on the diving-board, and seeing some little bubbles, dove into the sea and swam about beneath the water with the same ease as if he had been on the surface. Then he felt on his feet the flannel of her dress, and, in a moment more, had freed her from the rope in which she was entangled and was kneeling on the raft, while she lay white and still before him.

Fortunately, she had been beneath the water such a short time that it needed only a few minutes' expert effort on his part to get the air back into her lungs, and she breathed a long, gasping sigh. As he grasped her body in his arms, he noticed, even in the excitement of the moment, how soft yet firm was the flesh, and the perfect

proportion of her womanly figure; and as she lay before him, he saw that she had small, shapely hands, delicate ears, and smooth, soft skin, tanned to a perfect olive by the sun.

There was a fluttering of her eyelids, a few sighs, as sad to hear as if they had come from a breaking heart, and then she was looking up at him. Presently she spoke.

"I think I must have been nearly drowned,"—with a little sigh, so sweet and childish that Morris Ashton wanted to take her in his arms again and comfort her with the baby-talk of love.

"Oh, I do want mamma so!" she continued. "Can't you get me into the shore without swimming?"

Henry Brooks, who, with Margaret Lee, had climbed on the raft, now called to an acquaintance who was rowing near by, and in a few minutes they were safe on shore.

In spite of Ashton's insisting that nothing should be said about it, the accident proved the great topic of interest at the Casino after bathing hour. He was beset with questions of all kinds, which he answered briefly, leaving himself out of the account as much as possible; indeed, in this, as in all other affairs of life, he bore himself with unquestionable dignity.

That evening, as he stood alone on the piazza, he heard a step behind him, and turning, saw a girl with hands timidly held out for his own.

"I did not thank you before, did I?" she said. "How can I tell you what I feel? Words are a poor return for what you have done, and yet they seem all I can give you."

"Don't say that," he said, holding her hands so tightly that she could not withdraw them, "for I feel sure you can and will give me something more,—your friendship."

"I don't believe you need or want that," she murmured, flushing.

"Come with me; I want to talk with you." And so she leaned against the baluster while he sat on the step below her, the fire in his unfinished cigar dying out.

He had spoken to her so without much thought; an impulse of the moment perhaps,—an unconscious pleading of deep, soft eyes that needed him. Afterwards he talked with her without effort, seriously, as a man should talk to a young girl whose life he has saved and who is nervous and shy over thanking him for it; and, as they spoke together, he found that her replies were not those of a child, but that they came from a woman's heart.

"What strange eyes she has for so young a girl!" Morris Ashton thought; "they would be infinitely more beautiful though if she could only suffer to the depths of her

heart; yet why wish them changed by the bitter fruit of the tree of sorrow? and what a sweet innocent mouth!"

Ashton was too much of the world, too critical in his insight, not to know, without any other information than the observation of their short acquaintance, that this girl was unfamiliar with life,—that she had yet to learn of the great problem of good and evil in the world and the mystery of it all. She was trembling on the verge of womanhood. Who should be the one to waken in her the fierce longings, the mad hopes, the indifference, the despair that make up the round of life for those who have loved and know the bitterness of the truth? Some there might be, stony and cold, to whom the world was only a place, during later life, for the evolution of the mud-pies of childish days; but this girl was not among them,—he knew that with the keenness of animal instinct. How interesting it would be

to watch the change in her eyes and mouth, —the gradual development of womanhood in a habitation so sweet as this! and yet what a pity to destroy the confidence of one with such a trusting nature!

"What makes you think I will not want your friendship?" looking at her earnestly.

"Well, you are so much older than I, and more learned, and—I am only a girl yet, you know."

"But you are not a shallow girl, or a stupid girl, or even a giggling girl, are you?"

"No-o," somewhat doubtfully and modestly. "But still——" And then she stopped.

He laid his hand on hers.

"Well, then, try to be the friend I want you to be,—your own natural self. Don't you know, in this troublesome world, men appreciate the friendship of a good, true

woman, and that it is a help and a comfort to them in their trials and sorrows?"

"I will try," she said, while their hands met, warm and close, in a clasp such as she had never known before.

CHAPTER III.

"BY MOONLIT SEA."

"Last night we sailed, my love and I,
Last night and years ago,
Was it sea or moon we drifted through?
I think I ne'er shall know.
We had no oar,
We neared no shore,
We floated with the tide;
The moon was white,
The sea alight,—
None in the world beside."

"You will walk with me this evening?"

During supper she thought of nothing else. How proud she was that he had asked her, and how glad that it was he who had helped her that morning!

Later, Margaret Lee watched them as together they passed down the walk. Was

not this man brought down here by Colonel McAlpin for her? Had she not taken him as her friend, and what right had he, then, to go off with Miss Nobody in this way? But it appeared that Mr. Ashton, if poor, was still a man accustomed to have his own way, when it suited his wishes, even if heiresses and chosen matches had to stand aside on his account; and so she was compelled to satisfy herself with Frederick Harcourt, the heavy young Englishman who had come over from Newport, the day before, to see Jessie Brooks.

"I am going for a little walk, mamma," Catharine Forbes had said.

"Well, I wish, my daughter, you would not, for you are quite unstrung by that accident this morning," her mother answered, in that tone which told that she knew her wishes would avail nothing. "Come back very early, at all events, if you must go."

"You don't obey your mother, do you?"

Morris Ashton said, as they crossed the lawn.

"Well, you see I am mamma's only child. Papa died when I was very young, so I have been spoiled, I suppose. Then the two years we lived abroad mamma was ill, and I got in the way of taking care of her, so of course she cannot turn into a mistress after being led so long."

He was curious to know how this girl came to be so much a woman in thought, and yet was like a little girl in many of her ways.

"Tell me about yourself and where you have lived," he said.

"It won't take me long to tell you that. We lived at our place just out of New Orleans until about three years ago, when we went abroad. I have never had a chance to go out, and so, being brought up at home, and having read a great deal and not brushed against the world much, I suppose I am old-fashioned in my ways."

"Which means that you are a great deal of a woman and a child in one?"

"Well, I was twenty years old in May, so I really am a woman."

They had reached the Casino, and she was about to enter, but he would not have it so.

"I do not care for the crowd," he said. "The moon is just rising, and we will find it much more beautiful down on the beach."

"Is it quite right to go?" she asked.

"Most certainly it is. I would not ask you if it were not; don't you know that?"

Not quite true, Morris Ashton, perhaps, but then who would not wish to feel the touch of those slender fingers, and win the confidence of so sweet a child?

The moon was lifting up in the sky, misty and red, when they reached the beach. Catharine had a snowy scarf about her hair, and in the shadowy atmosphere Ash-

ton thought he had never seen anything more winsome and fair.

They walked along, without speaking, for a few moments.

"Moonlight on the waste of ocean makes me silent always," she said, at last. "Don't you think if people were to come down to the shore, each night, and watch the waves and look up at the stars, they would lose all their doubts about God? Surely there must be some power more than the forces of nature in all this?"

"Are her laws not great enough to control it all?"

"I never could have any doubts; they are unnatural to me," she answered. "Faith is born in me; I have always had it; I don't think anything could change it."

"You are a Roman Catholic?"

"Yes, mamma is, and so I am, but papa was —well, I am afraid not much of anything, and we grieve about it often, mamma and I."

It pleased him to know of her faith, for he felt there was something about the devotional part of that religion more suitable to the warm feelings of such a woman than the cold rubrics of other denominations.

"Do you go to our church?" she continued.

"Not often to any,"—smiling. It would not do to tell her he spent Sundays in fencing or sparring or sport of some kind. "I work so hard during the week I like to have one day in the seven that brings with it no obligations. By training I am an Episcopalian, but, I fear, not a very consistent one now. We need stronger weapons for the battle of life than prayer-books."

"I think every man is better for belief," she said, softly.

"I have grown beyond it, I fear, Miss Forbes. I am over thirty years old, and life is a poor amusement for me. I am storm-beaten at this half-way point, and can only see the heights I long for in the far distance

still. In the valley I pluck some flowers, but they are much alike and soon wither and die, and I loiter and grieve and toil, irresolute and indifferent,—and then I sit down and fold my hands and look at the sea, as we can do now on this comfortable piece of wreck."

"Don't speak like that," she said. "I hate to hear any one do so, but particularly a man of such power and brains as I think you possess. Far better to be killed in the open with your face to the foe than to hide in the brambles or run away."

"But the longing to play when we can only see work before us, and the temptations that beset us to barter away our manhood for a handful of silver or a riband to stick in the coat, like Browning's Lost Leader. There are so many ways of making our fortunes besides working them out in the dust, mid the heat and the sorrows of the stony road."

Afterwards, she understood, too well, what he meant; now it was only plain to her that life was sad for him, and she wished she could help him.

"But where is the use of life if it is not in the knighthood of it?" she said. "Surely you can see nothing noble in sloth, though it be in the mist of flowers? What can anything matter if you can only say, 'I have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith; for the rest——?'"

She caught his expression of wonder; for truly he was interested in it all. She had spoken earnestly, with nothing of the school-girl moralist about her.

It was long since he had heard such teachings, and he inwardly wondered what his friends at the Club would think if they could read a verbatim report; and perhaps Cora Ingram would like to see it also!

"Suppose," he replied, after a moment,—"suppose the end of all the striving is to

sit in the darkness, with foes everywhere you may turn, your body bruised, and with wounds that drop blood; with broken weapons at hand, knowing virtue untrue and seeing only defeat ahead, where will be the profit in having done the best we knew; in having battled for truth, when the grave of every hope we may have lies before us?"

"Because," she said, quickly, "it is cowardly to run away, and, besides, life does not have things so."

"Many, many times it does," he said, softly; and then went on: "Oh, how much better to avoid all such conflict and fly to the Lotus Land of sweet do nothing; to lounge on the sands, where it is always summer, and flowers and fruit are to be had for the picking, and die to the lulling sound of the surf on the shore!"

"And to be a sweetly contented South Sea Islander instead of a leader of men," she said.

"How ready she is in her answers!" he thought. "I wonder where she learned it all?"

They strayed off into other fields, without deciding the problem they had so earnestly discussed, each perhaps knowing the truth, but appreciating that the arguments against it were so forcible to frail humanity that neither reason nor the church could meet them entirely.

When he first talked with her, he had known that this girl had that indescribable womanly intelligence which may be indicated by saying that it is intuitive; but he was amazed at the depth of her knowledge and thought,—it was not obtrusive, but beautified all topics that she touched. She was not prim or pedantic, but had all girlhood's ways with the promise of womanhood,—good and true, and about her a breath of spring-time air subtle-scented as the odor of wood violets.

But it was the lovableness of the woman herself, more than her wit, which charmed him. He was well versed in occultism; and extreme physical affinity was one of his favorite beliefs. Had he not felt it strongly himself,—sometimes in instances where he was at a loss to explain it? And now he was possessed with a wild desire to clasp these soft hands in his own, to kiss the upturned mouth and eyes that invited his caresses with a longing that she did not know.

Were you aware, sweet reader, while you sat out there in the moonlight, last night, with the handsome fellow you had just met, that, as he leaned over you and spoke, perhaps some commonplace words, he had the same wild beating at his heart? He spoke no word, of course, because he knew it would be improper and cost him your friendship, but your hands were beckoning him, your eyes bidding him, and your

lips entreating him, though your mind was far away from such things.

Ashton, you see, had grown old enough to analyze his feelings, but the mind of Catharine Forbes had been kept free from such thoughts; she only knew that this was a man with whom it was a pleasant thing to talk, and that his voice lingered long in her ears.

"With the exception of Henry Brooks," she said to him, "I have really never known any men intimately. I have had no chance to meet them, and I suppose I must seem odd in my ways sometimes."

"I wish more women were like you, if you are so," he answered.

The moon had grown soft and pale in the hazy atmosphere of the summer night and made a dim silvery pathway over the sea, resting so quietly that the sound of the surf on the sand was but whispering to their ears. Westward lay the long reach of beach, with-

out end save the uncertainty of the night; but to the east, afar off, was the town, gay with its lights,—and they caught, now and then, the faint sounds of music.

"Is the pathway the moon has built to-night like that you see ahead in your life,—dim and uncertain?" She was returning to their former theme.

"Had you asked me that when we first came out here I might have truthfully answered that I was not much interested one way or another; now, I say that I hope it is not. Miss Forbes, I have talked to you, to-night, as I have not talked to any one for years,—you know I am alone in the world. Will you believe me? what you have told me has stirred my heart somehow. Your view as to the battle of life is the true one, but you speak without experience and not knowing its sorrows, its mad temptations, and its fool arguments, that by long custom beat our hearts into subjection.

Believe me, I shall never forget what you have said to me to-night, and I hope my pathway will be better and more certain in its end,—not a waste of waters and moonshine."

"Oh! if you could know how much a soul seems to me; how sick at heart I am to think of its sacrifice for the trifles life here can give, you might realize what I have told you." She looked him full in the eyes, —a beseeching look. "Come," she said, "let us return; it must be very late."

There was a letter addressed in the angular hand of a woman of the world lying on the dressing-case in his room; it was yet unopened. He tossed it into his trunk, carelessly.

How lovable she was, and how soft was her voice! Pshaw! what would the world say if they knew he had in his ears those sweet childish words, "I have fought the good fight; for the rest——?"

CHAPTER IV.

"AND SO WE'LL DRIFT."

"Oh! the town behind us faded in the pale, pale gray,
As we left the river shaded, and we drifted down the bay,
And across the harbor bar,
Where the hungry breakers are;
You and Grace, and Tom and I,
To the golden land with laughter,
Where we'd live in peace thereafter,
Just beyond the golden sky."

"My dear fellow.... what does this mean?" said Colonel McAlpin, the next morning, as he came into Ashton's room before he had gotten up.

"What does what mean?" from his friend, sleepily.

"Why, going off to the beach with Miss

Forbes all last evening instead of.... coming to the Casino dance."

"It means that I come away in the summer-time to do as I please, my boy," Ashton cried. "What time is it?"

"Ten o'clock; you had better hurry if you want to get into the dining-room before the doors close. But what am I going to do with Margaret Lee? I picked her out for you.... and now you don't seem to want her."

"Take her yourself, my boy, if she is so desirable: but you don't give me a chance; what is one night among so many? Miss Lee is really a sweet girl, but the tender bud of love must not be forced, else may it die ere it comes to perfection."

"Well, whatever plans you may make for to-night.... keep the.... whole of the afternoon clear, for the 'Jane' is in the offing, and it is the day of all days for a sail. I shall put a large party aboard her, and then .... Ho for the open sea!"

"All right, but don't fail to ask Miss Forbes."

As Ashton hurried down to breakfast, he saw Catharine Forbes ahead of him, and, as he overtook her, she turned aside to let him pass.

"Good-morning, Miss Forbes," he said, as he looked at her when she smiled and held out her hand; and then, "You had a long sleep, did you not? You look as if you had bathed in dew this morning. I am most glad our late walk did not harm you."

"I have been thinking about you so much," she said, strangely, as they went down together. "I dreamed of you last night; I thought you had become a great lawyer and you were pleading so earnestly for a woman; and she was innocent. You stood before the jury fearlessly, your eyes flashing and your voice growing more and more eloquent, but they did not pay any attention to what you were saying, and the

judge looked sternly at you. You spoke on and on,—oh! so long; but the jurymen's eyes told you that she would be convicted, and then you shrieked out in passionate cries, and the judge rose in his seat and put a black cap on his head and pointed his finger at you and said, 'He has broken the faith,' and then I awoke. It was an odd dream, was it not?"

"Very," he said, thinking what a queer little woman she was. "I don't think the dream will come true, though, for I fear, in the first place, I will never be a great lawyer."

"But," she interrupted, "that would make it true, too, because, then, you would have broken your faith with yourself. I know you can be if you try."

He shook his head thoughtfully, and,—"Have you had breakfast yet?" he asked; "and, please, may I sit at your table? Everybody else is through, I think."

Of course she could not refuse, and, ani-

mated by the influence of a large black-mail, the waiter presently brought them a breakfast that they pronounced excellent; though with the soft air from the ocean entreating them through the open window, perhaps they were too well satisfied with each other to complain of potatoes and chops.

It is chances like this that so shortly develop acquaintances into lovers. They breakfast together, they tennis together, they bathe together, they dine together, they sail together, they sup together, they dance together, they moonlight together, they flirt together, they love together, and then—and then, do they marry withal or part withal?

"We will bathe this morning, will we not?" he asked, when they could no longer delay rising. He slipped easily into the plural.

"If mamma will let me, and I suppose she must," she laughed, "since I am to have my life-preserver with me."

He waited for her, and they went down to the Casino together.

Here were many taking their morning decoctions and listening to the music. The unanimity with which everybody drank liquor, in some form or other, was startling, considering the fact that this was a prohibition State; but perhaps there was lurking in it the flavor of the juice of the forbidden fruit, and this it was that made the habit so delightful and universal.

They joined Margaret Lee and some friends by her invitation; and signalling Ashton to a chair next her, she said, with a possible concealed feeling in her tone,—

"You did not come to the dance last night, Mr. Ashton?"

He looked at her lazily, his head thrown back and his eyes narrowed to a mere line; a look under which she grew restless, and needs must turn away. He had never known a woman, rich or poor, young or old, who

was not more ruled by the influence of properly applied will than by the most loving persuasion; and certainly there was nothing to be gained by letting this one dictate to him at so early a stage of their acquaintance.

"We have so many of those things in the winter," he said, "I get tired of them, don't you?"

"Sometimes," she answered, a little nervously; "but last night was really nice." And, in defence of herself, she enlarged upon the charming time she had had.

"You are all to go with me on the yacht this afternoon," Colonel McAlpin said, as he passed with Mrs. Van Guilt on their way to the beach. "If the wind holds, it will be the best day we have had this season."

"Prohibition on board,"—from Margaret Lee.

"No; high license," he replied.

"How many are going?" asked Jessie

Brooks, charming in a blouse tennis suit and visored cap.

"Everybody we want; there is room enough for all."

"How about bathing this morning?" asked Margaret Lee, presently, looking at Ashton; but he had moved his chair back and was talking to Catharine Forbes in low words, which she tried, in vain, to overhear.

"I say we go, by all means, now," Henry Brooks answered, glaring over at Ashton, whom he was hating most cordially.

There was a general movement and preparation for the beach, and they all arose.

"Kate, may I speak with you a minute?" Brooks said.

She was still in conversation with Ashton, but on this he left her side for a moment, and found himself in a very easy manner the prey of Margaret Lee, Harcourt having marched off with Miss Brooks.

Ashton, after standing for a few minutes

with Margaret Lee and seeing no chance of joining Catharine again, proposed that they go to the beach. Truly, he did not care much. He knew the girl, who would follow, would not think less of him because he was leaning over and talking in such an interested way with this handsome woman.

And thus it happened that down on the beach, seeing how he was hurting her, he continued as a cruel sport what had really begun as an accident, and walked, swam, dived, and took the breakers with Margaret Lee as though she were the only woman he cared for in the world. He even excelled himself in interest, and she was exultantly sure he would not be able to resist her fascination; while the way he talked into her eyes and the low tones of his voice spoke what seemed the truth to her. This sort of thing was all old to him; yet, now, there was a new excitement in his heart. Could he be really in love with this sweet-faced

little woman who told him to be a good boy and was filled with all the freshness and girlish jealousy and hate of a rival, that she did not admit to her heart and yet which she was so ill able to conceal from him?

Even had Catharine been with a man of new interest, his attentions could not have diverted her; but with Henry Brooks, of whom she often tired without reason, and now positively hated, she was openly miserable, and treated him, he said, "Like a dog."

But he was a patient fellow, and never answered her in kind when she made cruel remarks. He made, however, the often mistake of lovers who are snubbed; too ready in sacrifice, he took no opportunity to make himself wanted, but warmly embraced all those when he was not. Not that we would advise a man to absolutely slight a woman under such conditions, but merely to adopt a studied and careful carelessness.

Wringing the water out of her hair, in the bath-room, Catharine Forbes said to herself, "All he said to me the whole morning, as he swam by with Margaret, was, 'The water is nice and warm, is it not?'" And some of the briny drops that rolled down her face were other than those of the sea.

"Did you have a nice bath?" he flung to her, when she came out, as he passed up the beach, still with Margaret Lee.

"No," she said to herself, after dinner, "I will not go on the sail this afternoon; I know I shall not enjoy it: it is too hot." She sought a secluded corner of the piazza, where the breezes came whispering in from the sea, and held a book before her face and turned the pages over and over and read not a word, but thought whether he would stay with Margaret all the afternoon, and what he would say to her; and what a hateful man he was.

Presently she was conscious that some one was coming along the piazza towards her, and her heart was beating to suffocation; she would not look up, she hated him so, and then his voice, gently,—

"I was cruel this morning. Forgive me; I am a brute."

In vain to try and greet him, Catharine Forbes, with any look of astonishment; his eyes are too well trained in bravery of reply. He did not love you the less because you had no stereotyped stony glare and question, "Cruel? I don't know what you mean," but turned away and by your silence admitted it all. Unless you could have concealed it from the beginning, any defence would have been idle.

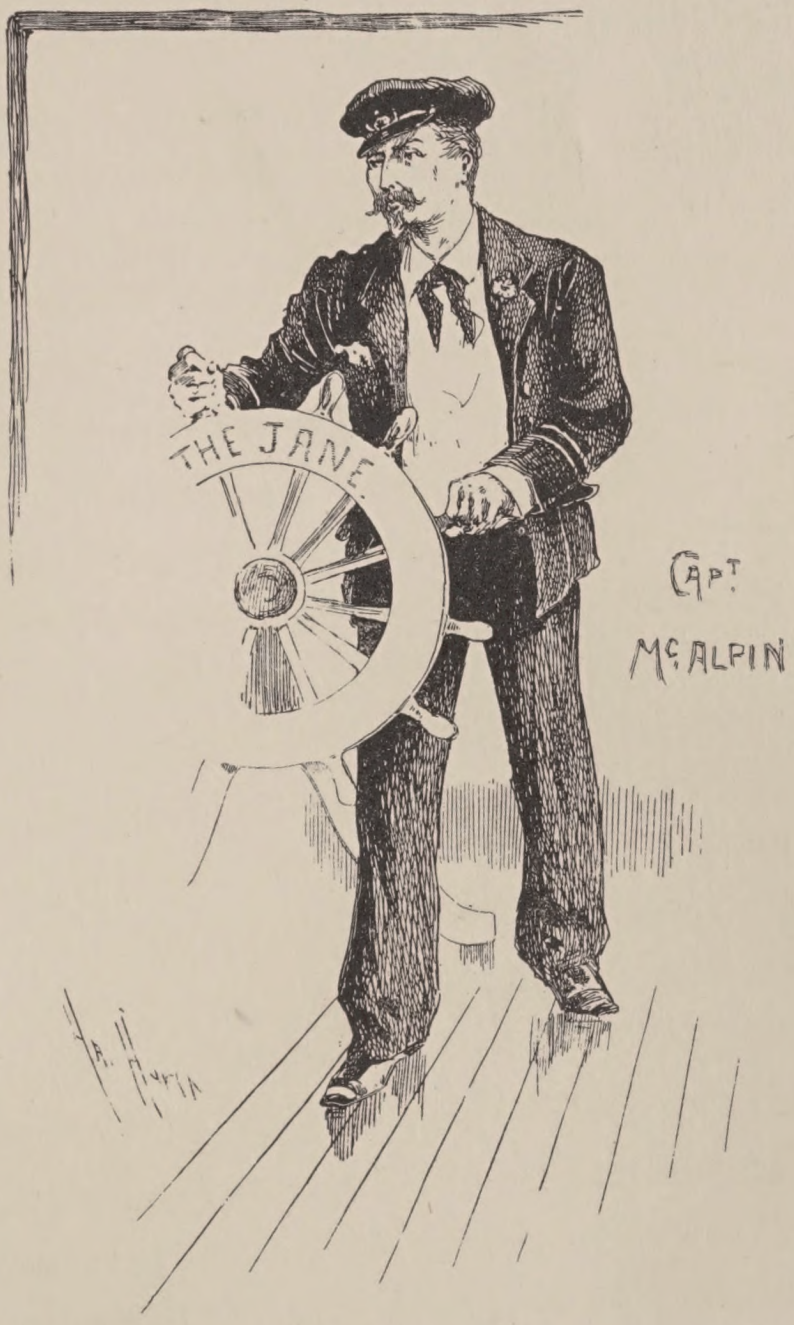
"They are going down to the yacht, and your mother tells me you will not go. You will come, will you not? Some may think it strange, if you do not; others would be glad; and one would be so sorry and disap-

pointed that he would find no pleasure in it all."

Gossip, jealousy, and love, any one of these enough to have made her go, for he did not intend to fail; and well pleased with himself at his success, by the time they reached the pier she had, under the persuasion of his voice, almost forgotten how different it had all seemed half an hour ago.

The "Jane" was a schooner-rigged yacht of considerable dimensions, and the roomy decks and cabins offered many places where the guests could draw apart together, if such an expression is allowable; to be plain, there were lots of nice places for "talking," and they were not neglected.

Captain McAlpin, as he was now called, in the glory of his professional naval costume, was so excited that he sometimes stopped in the middle of a sentence for half a minute, struggling for the rest; he had taken the wheel himself, and, as they swung


THE JANE
Capt
McALPIN

off before a steady full-sail breeze, Margaret Lee thought she had never seen a handsomer or more gallant commander, while a feeling of true tenderness for him came to her. He had such a high-bred face, that combined all the beauties of a race of cultured ancestors. His nose was long and straight, the lines of his head refined, and his eyes, as he watched the course of his boat, clear and honest.

Banjos and guitars had been brought aboard, and many choruses were sung, with more or less effect. Ashton had an excellent barytone voice and sustained many of the songs by his efforts.

Presently, several of the guests, individually, were called upon, and Margaret Lee said, a little tauntingly, perhaps,—

"What a pity you did not bring your mandolin, Kate! you could have sung for us."

"One of my sailors, an old Spaniard, has

one, I think," Captain McAlpin said, overhearing the conversation.

And when it was brought there was no way of escape. It was much soiled and worn, and not of a good tone; however, Catharine managed to get some music out of it. First she played a Spanish dance, which caused the owner of the instrument to smile with delight, and then she sang to its accompaniment a plaintive song that kept them silent. There was something in her voice like that of one whose heart is touched by sorrow that will not go away.

"I wonder if she is conscious how pretty she is?" Ashton thought, as he watched her fingers touch the strings, and tried in vain to catch her eyes, which were cast down on the mandolin, held against her heart, beating foolishly with the unusual excitement of singing before so many people.

He felt in the depths of his soul that desire to have her for his own, to be always

by her, where he might watch over her forever,—that wish to protect her from trouble, to see that the impurities of the world did not come near her, which is always so much a part of the truest affection.

Slowly she raised her long lashes and looked over at him. Did she catch that tenderness in his eyes which was at his heart? She flushed painfully, and would not, for all the entreaties of the men or the veiled jealousy of the women, sing again.

"I think I like you better than I did," Jessie Brooks said, as she and Ashton stood on the bow, leaning over and watching the water foam beneath the figure-head.

"Then, if you have outgrown your dislike in one day, may you not truly adore me in three?"

"Stranger things have occurred."

"But you don't like me as well as Harcourt, do you?"

"No,—no; but, then, he is different.

Would you like to know why I have changed?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, I think you do as you please, without regard to the people who make remarks. I do it myself, and I guess that's why I admire it in others."

"You honor me too much;" yet, while he could not talk confidences with this girl, it pleased him mightily that she had spoken like this; and so odd is human nature that perhaps the sincere admiration of this child for the independence which he had shown indefinitely added something to his love for Catharine Forbes.

While they were standing talking, and finding in each other interest that they had not thought of before, the yacht put about, and a puff coming at the time, the jib flapped over with such force as to break one of the eye-bolts, and a block swung across would have struck Jessie Brooks had Ashton

not jumped forward and caught it. As it was, it hit him in the leg and almost floored him, leaving him with a limp from which it took him some time to recover.

"I am sure that would have killed me if you had not stopped it."

"Well, you see the use of making a friend of me; now, half an hour ago I should have let it strike you and enjoyed seeing you die."

"I hope it will be my turn to have my life saved next," Miss Lee smiled, when they came back to the group on the after-deck.

"Oh, you will not need help," Ashton replied; "you are too delightfully strong; you can save yourself, you know."

He was strictly polite, nor was there the slightest trace of disrespect in his tones, yet Margaret felt that her little note of sarcasm had been noticed, and knew that the answer was meant as a reply to it.

"You two .... don't get on very well to-

gether, do you?" the colonel said to her when they were alone. "To tell you the truth, Margaret, Morris is sometimes very intractable, and you never get anything out of him by trying to say things to hurt him, or answering back."

"Oh, you must not mind what we say," she said; "we are awfully good friends."

Despite Colonel McAlpin's advice, she could not resist the temptations of sarcasm, for she knew her stabs were felt; Ashton was a strong man, but too easily susceptible to the influence of blood and the world.

As the evening came on the breeze died out, and while they floated listlessly into the harbor supper was served; afterwards Catharine Forbes and Ashton made their way to the bowsprit and sat on a coil of rope, quite out over the water.

The waves grew purple in the light from the west and lit with gay prismatic colors, while the cottages and hotels far away

glowed with red and gold and crimson, and seemed to these two like the halls of some magical city sprung from the sea.

"Do you think that the streets are paved with gold?" she asked, without looking at him. "Are the houses filled with all the beautiful things we long for in life, and will our hopes come out to meet us, robed in purple and fine linen, and as true as we have dreamed of them?"

"Do you wish for so many things?" he asked. "Your life must have been free from all sorrow."

"I have not suffered what people usually call sorrow, such as the loss of money, home, and things like that, and I was too young to know what death was when my father died." She looked far into the sunset, that lit her face with a soft glow.

"What is it, then?" he asked, softly. "Tell me, will you not?"

"Did you ever have your heart filled with

a vague wish to be something to yourself; to feel that life was more to you than eating and sleeping; to feel that indefinite uplifting towards the true and good, while all the time, as you looked ahead, you saw only the mists of uncertainty? So I feel at times, even though my life has been so without trouble."

How unconsciously came those girlish thoughts, which he knew, so well, were the longings after the deep love which would make her a woman!

He spoke to her in answer with earnest heart, his voice falling upon her ears in that soft summer-time as never a man's had done before, or other might do again.

Float through the purple sea, O fairy pleasure-boat, with listless sails, tired with their labor, drifting you into the haven where you would be! Chant on, O singers, while the halo of dying day is about you; sing your sweetest, saddest song, for the

light on land and sea never was before,—never can be again quite the same, and to listening hearts your voices are of those who carol to a new-born day!

And Ashton looked and saw this girl to be so fair, so pure, so good, an awe came upon his heart, new to him, and he laid his hand over her own, which was by him on the coil of rope, and "Kate, I love you," he said.

After a little the glow of the sunset died, and the sea was gray and the houses dim and unnatural in the coming of the night; and the moon rose fair over the land, and by her soft light, blended with that of the dying day, the boat came to anchor.

And some one was humming, with the guitar as an accompaniment,—

"Oh, love for a year, a week, a day,
But alas for the love that loves alway."

CHAPTER V.

"GO IN WITH ME TO DINNER."

"And I thought, come glory or come distress,
In this wonderful, weary wilderness,
This hour is mine to the day of death;
The fruit, the wine, and my lady fair,
With a flower of the heath in her dim, brown hair,
And a sigh of love in her fragrant breath."

"I TELL you, Morris, you don't know a good thing when you see it. Now there's Margy Lee, you don't half appreciate her."

So the colonel called to him through the open door-way between their rooms, while they were dressing after the sail. It was a habit of his to talk while he wandered about, swearing at all his articles of dress in the order in which he might want them.

"My dear fellow, exactly the same thing

you said to me this morning," Morris Ashton answered.

"You think you have an easy conquest .... in Catharine Forbes, but you had better be on your .... guard. Young Brooks is an old friend, and they say he has an understanding with her, and, after she has had enough of society, she is to .... she is to .... settle down with him."

"Some of Margaret Lee's gossip, told that it might be repeated to me," Ashton thought, but he only said, "Very likely true; I hope so, for I think they are wonderfully well suited to each other, so far as I can tell from my limited observation."

He felt a touch of jealousy at this vague report, which he told himself was quite amusing. Was this child playing with him? No! impossible; there was nothing of the coquette in her nature.

Still, it worried him, and would not leave his thoughts. "Curse it all," he said to

himself, "have I gone back to callow youth again, that rumor like this, about a girl that I have just met, can stir me so? I will ask her if it is true; she will not deceive me?"

"From careful inquiries I have made .... I am sure Miss Lee is worth at least seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in her own right," the colonel continued, like all determined match-makers, never to be driven from his theme. "You will make the greatest mistake of your life if you don't try for her. I really believe she likes you already, although you .... hardly treat her civilly."

"She is a spoiled woman, and therefore she likes me because of my attitude towards her. If I knelt it would be all over with me."

"Don't talk like that, my boy; you do not know her; she is one of the nicest and brightest girls in the world."

"It is not often you are so enthusiastic over one of the sex; why is it?"

"Because I cannot bear to see a man deliberately throw away his chances. Money and social position are the things you must have, Morris; you can do nothing without them. You can never make a name for yourself as a lawyer. Why? because you spend too much time on Society, and you have grown such a slave to her that, left to yourself, you can never break the chains she has bound about you. With the requisites, you will certainly become a social leader, and this fine mistress of yours, who flirts you and treats you so cavalierly, will come bowing and cringing at your feet,—you will wear the crown, and she the shackles, and you will be as happy as we may be in this mud-hole of a world."

"Perhaps I am tired of all the foolish race for wealth and position, and would rather bear my burdens than win freedom at a price you have not named."

The colonel came quite into the room

now, and, holding up a patent-leather shoe by the toe, shook it vigorously.

"Taking your best view of it, what will your income be five years from now, when you will be nearer forty than thirty? Will it be enough for you to marry whom you please and live in a way that will not kill your artistic senses and make you sour and old before your time? Look on the two pictures; is there more than one way for you?"

"Did you ever know me to do anything you asked me to?" Ashton said, by way of answer.

"Never," the colonel replied.

"Then let us go down and have a drink before we go to the Casino. I believe I am to have the pleasure of taking your paragon to dinner there."

He felt the full truth of what his friend had said; but no one should dictate to him. Richer women than Margaret Lee might

be had if it was to be as his friend had said; and he wondered what had become of the letter he had received that day.

"I am afraid you don't like me, for some reason or other," Margaret Lee said, as she walked down to the Casino with him. Henry Brooks had asked them to a small dinner, and they were on their way thither.

"She makes a mistake in speaking so to me," Ashton thought. "She should command, not beg. Perhaps she wishes me to think she is saying, 'Oh, I am so hurt that you do not care.' She has been too long in the world, and is too muscular to play the *ingénue*." However, he said, "How little we can judge others' feelings by what we see on short acquaintance! I admire you most sincerely, and I have nothing but good thoughts of you."

"The reason, I suppose, why we neither of us like the other is because we were told we would before we met," she went on,

somewhat ignoring his last remark. "If you want to make enemies for life, tell two people who have never met that they will like each other immensely; dilate upon all their good qualities; be perfectly certain they will be absolutely congenial; and then let them meet where they can see each other every day."

For the first time, Morris Ashton felt a liking for this girl, who spoke so freely, for he knew that, if she was a little hard, she was at least honest. He laughed openly, and said,—

"Let me add that, if you wish to see the best friends in the world, take the same two people, let them confess the truth to each other, and then start anew and make up their own opinions, without regard to prejudices excited beforehand by heedless persons."

Now they fell into a conversation, easy and natural, and found in each other much

to like; so that by the time dinner was served they were on such terms that Catharine Forbes, by the side of her host, across the table, felt strange and quiet when she looked at them.

There is a peculiar cruelty in the hearts of all men, and of most women, when they love, which cannot be explained by the fact that its results show that they are loved by the one they torture, or that it tests the question of mastery between them. It is too wanton for that. It is a brute feeling of the same kind as that which causes some children to delight in maiming and worrying animals,—why, they cannot explain, and the more suffering they see the more they delight to inflict. Something of this in Ashton's nature caused him to display a devotion to Margaret Lee which even his newly-found liking for her in no way required, and he leaned and talked confidentially, now and then, while she laughed her replies, often loud

enough for Catharine Forbes to hear, but too ambiguous for her to do more than imagine that they meant far more than they did.

Henry Brooks, poor fellow, who had gotten up the dinner in hopes it might please Catharine, was seriously hurt when he saw that she could not enjoy it. She tried so hard to be pleasant, to make it a success; but to do so, under the circumstances, required an amount of deceit of which she was not yet capable, and she could only plead a headache after the heat of the sail that afternoon. This he knew was not the reason, and cursed inwardly. Next to them, Jessie Brooks was propounding a conundrum to the colonel:

"Why is a man with a pleasure-boat the most discontented man in the world?"

"Because people don't care anything for his parties."

"Not for fishing-parties by the captain,

JESSIE.

afterwards. No; the answer is because he may have all his friends on board, *yacht* he is not happy."

Several of the guests groaned, but Catharine Forbes was far away from it all. Could this man be so false? What had he told her at twilight to-day, and what might he have said more, had she not stopped him? And now—— Oh, why had Henry wanted this tiresome dinner? Why could she not go home and be alone, away from these people, who only enjoyed themselves to annoy her? He would not look at her, and forever smiled at that woman who made such love to him. She was not conscious how new were all these bitter thoughts to her, and that it was the sorrow of love which held her so close as to stifle her.

"I am very sorry, Kate, that you are so tired," Brooks said, bending over her tenderly.

"I am not tired; and please don't bother

me," she answered, wearily. She did not appreciate, until long afterwards, what a comfort it was to have one by her side whom she knew so well that she might treat him as her humor liked, without offence.

"This winter you must come on and see me in Boston; it is such a short distance, you know," she overheard Margaret Lee say. She could not catch Ashton's reply, but he must have been promising much, he talked so earnestly and leaned so close.

At last dinner was over, and, with her mother and Henry Brooks, she went back to the hotel, most of the other guests staying to hear the last number of the evening's music.

"It would have been better had I not given the dinner," Henry Brooks said to Mrs. Forbes, after Catharine had gone upstairs. "Kate did not enjoy it at all. She scarcely even likes me, I sometimes think."

Mrs. Forbes loved this boy, he was so strong and wholesome. She had done all she could for him with her daughter before they went abroad, but it was worse than useless. Catharine had laughed and said she never thought of such things,—that Henry was her big brother and never could be anything else.

So they had parted, and now he had come here to meet them on their return. She saw he was changed. Something of the thoughtfulness of the man there was about him, and his step was more deliberate and his manners less boyish.

He could tell his mind now without halting or stumbling over his words. For his great physical strength he was the admiration of women; but, unaffected, and caring so little for any one save Catharine, he had passed it by quite unharmed.

"What has life for us when we live only for a woman?" he said to himself, bitterly.

"And what is sacrifice, or watchfulness, or thoughtful tenderness, when the reward thereof, in reality, as well as in our own hearts, is only vanity?" From which it may be seen that he, too, was drinking of the bitter cup of the sorrows of love.

Mrs. Forbes did her best to cheer him and make him hopeful.

"Time," she said, "will show Catharine that she loves you; so do not give up. We are none of us proof against a well-laid siege, and all women dearly love an undaunted man. But don't let her actually tread upon you, Harry: be independent and strong, and I believe, dear boy, all will come out right in the end."

And with this and a stroll in the moonlight under Catharine's window he was obliged to be content.

But she, sitting there in her dressing-gown, her long hair about her white shoulders, did not see him or care that he was

there. She turned out the light, and opened the window wide to look out at the moonlit sea. It was in a jeering mood to-night; the surf fell on the rocks with a dull, sullen splash now and then, to die with a shiver that almost annoyed her. But the breeze,—how cool it was, and how softly and modestly it kissed her white bosom and whispered in her ears its messages, sad, yet so full of meaning!

"How I hate him!" she thought. "He must have a bad heart to say such things to me, and then, an hour afterwards, behave so outrageously with that horrid Margaret Lee. Some women are never contented unless they can make other people unhappy."

But the breezes would not have her think such thoughts, and kept whispering in her ears,—

"How kind he is when he is by you! how careful of the little tendernesses of life! and his voice is so low, and he understands

all your thoughts before they are spoken. Sorrow and pain are open books to him, and when he takes your hand, his grasp is so strong you know he is your master; and when his breath is in your hair——"

"I told you, my dear boy, you would like her——" and she was conscious that the man she thought of was on the balcony off the colonel's room below her. She could not choose but hear.

"I never spent a more enjoyable evening," his voice said, and then she flew from the window to bed, and covered her head and sobbed.

For a long time she lay there tossing, while the voices of the two men talking below came to her like the murmurs of the sick-room to the convalescent on first waking from dreamland; and then all was quiet, and the loving breeze again sought her, and, seeing her lying there still and sorrowful, one tiny white foot hanging over

the side of the bed, and the dark hair tangled over the pillow, pitied her and offered sympathy and comfort. It bore to her the salty tears of the ocean; and, as she fell asleep, it whispered in her ears of a day when all would be well.

CHAPTER VI.

"I PRYTHEE TO OUR ROCK."

"Do you remember it, darling, I wonder,
Do you remember so long, long ago,
All that we said as we strolled there together
Out on the rocks when the tide was low?"

"GOOD-MORNING, Mr. Ashton." There was a slight touch of defiance in the voice, and a look from the dark eyes sad rather than bitter, as Catharine Forbes passed him in the dining-room next morning.

Was it some unthought-of touch of coquetry that made her wear her most charming gown? He thought she had never seemed sweeter: such a haughty way of carrying her head at times, and her figure so dainty and straight.

He was among the last at breakfast, and

the colonel, who finished his coffee just as his friend came in, left him at once, to join Margaret Lee, who was on the piazza outside; and then Catharine Forbes had passed to her table, quite across the room, where she sat alone, reading a book she had brought with her, and now and then looking up from its pages to glance out at the ocean.

"I wonder," he thought, "what she is reading,—and if the words convey any meaning to her, or whether she is thinking of me,—kindly."

Sitting here alone, at the most prosaic of all meals, and with an appetite dulled by the dinner of the evening before, he could not, even under these unfavorable conditions, look at this girl without a feeling of passion for her,—a longing at his heart so strong that he was almost ashamed. It seemed childish and unlike him to be thus affected by one unversed as a school-girl in those

arts of pleasing that some women know too well, and very far removed from those who had made up his life for many years past. And yet it was true! He was so used to self-analysis that he quite realized the strength of his own feelings.

She looked across, and caught his eyes full in her own.

Over the white tables, where yet some of the half-finished morning repasts lay unremoved,—between the waiters, who went about, a little impatient at the delay of these late-comers,—yes, in this desolate, annoying breakfast-room, their eyes met in a look of mutual knowledge that they neither of them could resist.

Call to him, bright eyes, with that far look of yours; out of the depths of a woman's soul, reproach him, defy him, love him, and he will come to you!

His words were quite commonplace:

"I hope you are faring better than last

evening. Did you not enjoy it? It was excellently well served, I thought, but you ate nothing."

"No,"—indifferently; "my head ached horribly after the sail in the afternoon, and this is a tiresome sort of place; and the people are like the place,—aren't they?"

He was certain, now, that she was hurt because of his attentions to Margaret Lee the night before, and was trying to be cold, —to take on some of the careful dignity that she was fearing she had forgotten; and the longing at his heart to win back the brightness to her face grew deeper. He had asked Margaret Lee to bathe with him that morning, but, as he saw her now, through the open window, going down towards the Casino with the colonel, he made up his mind that he would make her failure to wait for him the reason for avoiding his engagement should it so please him.

He recognized the fact that an offended

woman likes anything better than silence, and, feeling that before he spoke he must establish their old relations, he at once began, in a way that Catharine could not resist, to bring her mind unconsciously into other channels. He spoke of the place, of the people, of a thousand-and-one things about them which were of interest, in such a forcible, half-humorous way that it was but a little while ere she was laughing with a gayety that could come only from a heart free from bitterness.

Suddenly he said to her, as if knowing that she must acknowledge his mastery,—

"You were cold to me just now; and yet, you see, without an explanation, your heart is clear again."

How pleasant it was to know the power he had over her, that might have galled a worldly or less sympathetic woman! She did not speak, but looked out of the window at the sea, and became serious once more.

"But I have things to say to you, and questions to ask of you, on different matters than these. Will you go to the rocks with me this morning?"

"Why should we not talk here?" she said, doubtfully, not daring to turn her eyes towards him, lest her feeble defence should be at once overthrown.

"Because I want to be with you all the morning undisturbed. Don't refuse. Life is short; the day is God's own; we may be gone to-morrow, and our hearts will be filled with vain regrets."

She turned towards him, suddenly, with a little shake of her head and a half smile on her lips.

"Well, then, yes, of course I will go; what is the use of saying no?"

She was wondering what it meant, that this man had but to say a few words to her and she forgot everything save her desire to be near him. She was used to taking care

of herself, yet here was one who was so much stronger of purpose that, after meeting him two or three times, his will controlled her coming and going as easily as if he had been her only guide. She could not know, quite, why thus it was; but, since she was happy with him and had this longing to see him, to talk with him, why not give up her foolish resolves for his wishes?

Thus it was she went with him; but Ashton noticed the doubt in her eyes and the trace of sadness that was like love's unwept tears.

Young Brooks, by the side of the widow, who had come to call on his mother and had then invited him to drive down to the beach with her, saw Ashton and Catharine Forbes depart with sorrow and anger in his soul:

"Confound it, why can't he take out Mrs. Van Guilt, here, who is probably dying for him, instead of Kate? What can she see in a man like that, anyhow?"

Out from the cluster of hotels, in a direction away from the Casino and the beach, was a long, low point of land, ending in a rocky shore, over which the sea surged and sighed as if mourning that it could not clasp the slippery boulders and drag them back into its depths. Here, on the great rocks, there were many places arranged by the kindly ocean, where the wanderers, who came in careless twos, never hurrying, and always stopping by the way to look into each other's eyes, might rest unheard, and, by the aid sometimes of an umbrella, quite unseen.

Whether we have fixed to speak of pain, or even of pleasure, if we have named a spot where the converse is to be, we are loath to touch the subject until we arrive at that particular place; this, perhaps, was why Catharine Forbes and Ashton talked of everything save what was serious on their way thither.

Until this morning she had been quite unfamiliar with the lighter side of his nature, for pleasure, desire, or chance had willed it that they had spoken only of the graver things of life. Now it was for Ashton to show her how well he might be humorous, and still retain his dignity, while she knew from his tender ways that the thought in his heart was of his love for her.

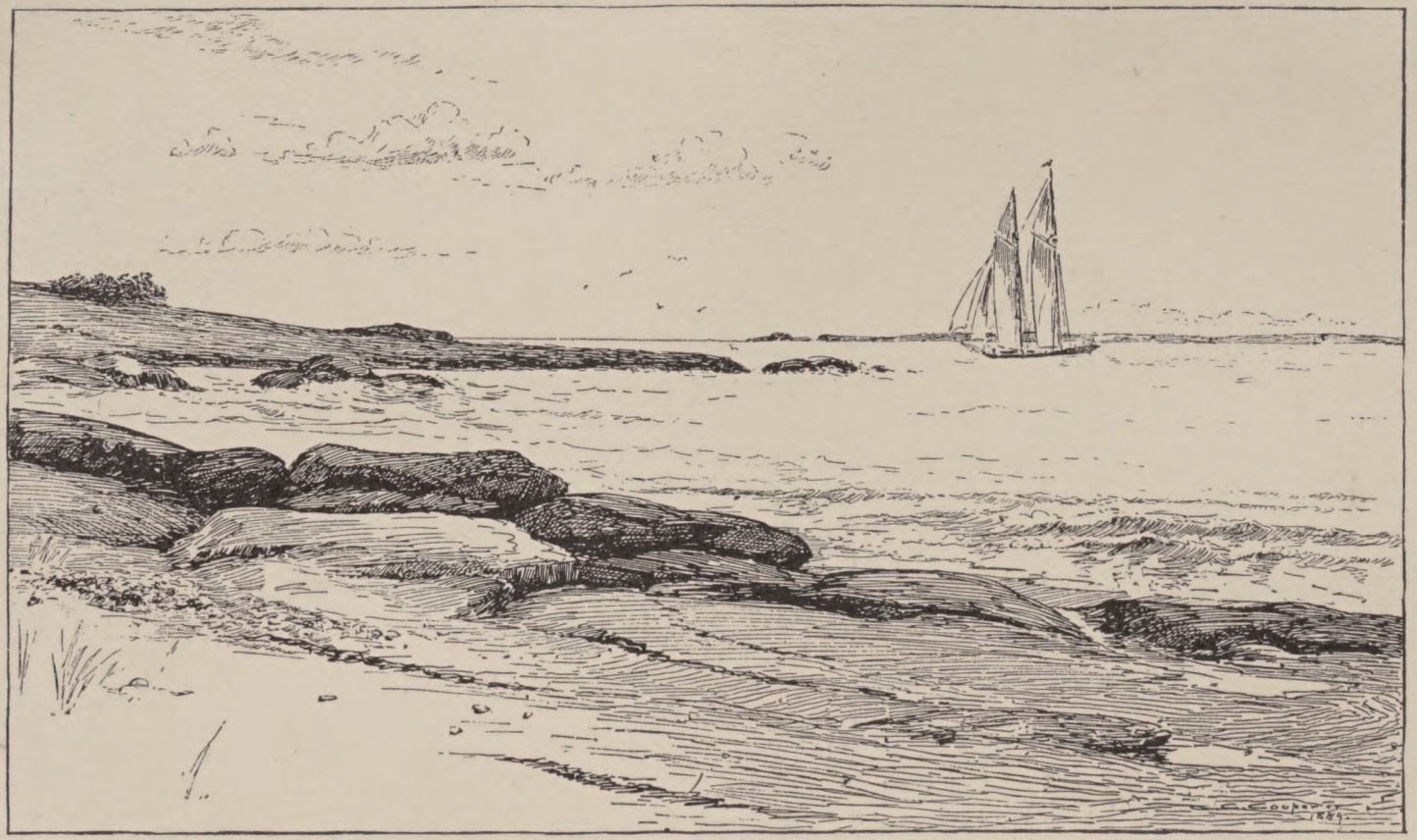
Then, as they stood on a rock far above the tide-line, and Catharine looked out to the sea, where a white-sailed yacht drifted lazily over the bay, she said, softly, thinking of his conversation at breakfast,—

"Do you really mean to go away soon?"

"I can never tell exactly when I may be called. Is there one, I wonder, who would care?"

No reply from her lips, and her eyes, still seaward.

"Why were you offended this morning? Have I done anything wrong?"



"A WHITE-SAILED YACHT DRIFTED LAZILY OVER THE BAY."

It was hard for her to reply. What could she say had displeased her?

"I am not angry with you," she answered, finally. "I only thought you did not care whether I was so or not."

"If what I heard last night about you were true, I should not care much," he said.

She turned to him with surprised eyes and a ring of rising anger in her voice:

"Well, what was it?"

"They say you are engaged, or have what is called an understanding with young Brooks."

"Well, and if it were true?" she said, slowly and defiantly. "Why not?"

"No reason, save that I do not wish to encroach upon another man's rights in this way." And he looked at her half quizzically, she thought.

"Since when did you become so careful of other men's rights regarding women, Mr. Ashton?"

"Believe me," he answered, "I am certain that the report is not true; but, if it were so, I would not wish to see you accepting attention from any other than the one to whom your promises were given. It would not be right; and, whatever any one else may do, you must follow out your truth. You remember what you told me?—'I have fought the good fight; for the rest——'"

This recollection of his, with the evident sincerity in his wishes for her, removed the last vestige of trouble between them, and she told him of the true state of things about herself and Henry Brooks; her account of him was so pathetic that Ashton, world-hardened though he was, felt that a noble heart was opposed to him here. What mattered it, though, since she cared for Morris Ashton now, and it was summertime, and they were together, and he loved her?

He told her of himself, freely, in a way he

had never done any other woman, even in his most unguarded or loving moments.

"What folly," he said, "to say that the whirl of society destroys our feelings! If I prayed to-day, it would be for only one thing in life,—that you might be happy; yet you say I am worldly, and certainly I have known you too short a time to make my prayer seem sincere."

His reward was a look that told him she did believe all he said. Wandering over the rocks, they stopped now and then, to linger and look into each other's faces and read there thoughts that lips might not speak.

Finally, in the crevice of a large boulder, they found a spot protected from the sun's rays, and of such a form that they could half recline, with a stony support,—a resting-place somewhat hard, but very comfortable after their walk.

Was ever a morning like this?

To her it seemed as if all the joys of life

were here by the side of this strong, easy man, who forced her to believe him; and to him there was about this child a sense of pleasure so delicate that he thought of things long forgotten and felt better for the thinking.

How her face lit up when he told her by his manner, by his eyes, by the tones of his voice, the tale he had told often before, but never to a woman like this! There was more than the sweetness of childhood about her that drew him on; it was the attraction of her soft, loving ways, with that unknown depth of a woman's unawaked passion.

"Would you not like to take a fairy boat and pass out over those tranquil waters, bound for a land where it is always summer?" he said. "And then, after strange islands had gone by, some night, the purple sails lit by the low-hanging lamps of the stars, we would lift up our voices in a love-song as we drifted in silver seas to the

harbor of pleasure and forgetfulness and eternal youth and saw the moon shining on the white walls of the city of love."

"Why will you always talk so?" she questioned. "You know it is a plea for the less beautiful side of our lives; and yet you must know how true it sounds to me, when you say it so."

"How can that which is pure and sweet be evil?" he asked, gravely.

"It is the impossible, an appeal to the animal of our natures, which drags at the soul, always luring us to come and herd with it and be even as itself."

"Yet it is ever with me. I do so need some one at my side, always, to tell me it is not true,—that we cannot find the land, even if our boat is manned by experience and Crœsus is in the pilot-house."

"Be true to yourself, my friend, and you will need no one else," she said, gravely.

"To be that, I must have you," he said.

"Kate, why will you not listen to me? You must hear it before we part. I love you,—I love you. I want you to be with me always. What does it matter whether we have known each other for a year or a day, if it is true, and you love no one else?"

He tried to get her hands in his own, but she rose and turned away.

"Oh, don't! do-don't—don't! please don't! Not yet; not now. I must think," she said, and then went down over the rocks with him towards the town.

CHAPTER VII.

"COME UNTO THESE YELLOW SANDS."

"The yellow sands are fringed with pearl,
The long surf whitens up the bay,
And love to them is now so near,
And all the world so far away."

"I WANT you all to drive down the beach with me this afternoon," Harcourt said, on the piazza, after dinner. "I have taken two coaches, that we may have a jolly big crowd, and we can have supper on the sands and be back in time for the dance to-night."

"You want to tire us out, don't you?" Jessie Brooks said; "but I guess we can stand it, if the men can."

The colonel, at the request of Harcourt, with whom he was on very good terms, took charge of the arrangements, and it was

owing to his diplomacy that Ashton found himself, during the drive down, by the side of Margaret Lee, who was in no very good humor.

"Mr. Ashton," she said, "I am not accustomed to have men deliberately break their engagements with me, without excuse."

"How do you know that I do not have one?"

"I saw you coming in from the rocks with your lady-love."

"Please do not refer to Miss Forbes so," he said, deliberately; "not unless you have some greater warrant for your remark than what you may have seen. As for my engagement with you this morning, I saw you going off with Colonel McAlpin, and concluded you were tired of me. I am truly sorry if I was mistaken."

With this she knew she must be content.

On their arrival at the beach the colonel took possession of her, and Ashton felt

vastly relieved. Surely this feeling of utter weariness for one so rich and attractive had never been his before. Jealousy he had known, anger he had felt, and the pulse-throb of wild rivalry for women, but never before had there come over his heart such dull, sweet longing that made all the world tiresome to him, save only one.

In the coach, Brooks said to Catharine Forbes,—

"That widow woman annoys me exceedingly." This was his title for Mrs. Van Guilt, who so admired his manly figure that she would not see how indifferent he was to her. "She wants me to bathe with her, ride with her, dance with her, and visit her," he continued. "But she bores me horribly, and I wish she would let me alone. I should think that the crowd of men she has always about her would be enough for her."

But Catharine only looked thoughtfully at the sea.

"Where were you this morning?" he went on: "I did not see you on the beach or at the Casino."

"I went walking with Mr. Ashton, on the rocks."

And then his turn for silence came.

On their arrival, Mrs. Van Guilt, glancing up at him with her pale-blue eyes from beneath the brim of her white sailor's hat, said,—

"Come with me a moment, won't you? I want you to help me with something."

So, perforce, he was led away.

"I wish you would come up to my cottage and take dinner with me, some time," she said.

"I should love to," he answered, quickly, as though to prevent her fixing a day, "but I go out but little, and I am far from a success as a conversationist."

"But you and I would be quite alone," she said, too sweetly for his liking. "You

"'COME UP TO MY COTTAGE AND TAKE DINNER WITH ME.'"

will come, won't you?—say Friday, at seven."

He promised, albeit he made a mental reservation that he would certainly be ill on the evening named.

"Won't you walk down the beach a little way with me?" Harcourt said to Jessie Brooks, when he had succeeded, by some adroitness, in separating her from a group of men who were enjoying her ringing laughter.

"Why do you always want to leave pleasant company?" she asked, in a voice of assumed sorrow. "As soon as I use all my efforts and make myself the belle of a party, you must come and drag me away, just as I am beginning to like it."

"Why, now, really, if you mean that, we will go back again," he said, drawlingly, but with a ring of decision in his voice.

"Not much, after you have spoiled my good time. Come, don't be silly. Do you

suppose that you could drag me with wild horses if I didn't want to come?"

The force of her reasoning was quite apparent; and so they wandered slowly down the beach, he digging his umbrella lazily into the sand at every other step, often stopping to question her and look into her careless blue eyes, that sometimes changed under his gaze and were veiled with a woman's shyness.

Colonel McAlpin, after giving directions to the servants as to the fire, the supper, and other matters, sat on a bit of rock, talking to Margaret Lee.

"Why are you always taking so much trouble for others?" she said, kindly, looking at him with appreciative eyes.

"I don't take any trouble at all," he replied, rather shortly. "I do it all for my own amusement. I like to.... watch people annoy each other on these parties, and when they are over see them come up and pour out their thanks about....

'delightful party,' 'lovely time,' and so on."

"Oh, don't be so cynical," she said, carelessly. "It is altogether assumed with you."

"Now, look at that poor boy Brooks, with his nice face and clean heart; the widow of the golden locks is bothering him to death with her attention, and he wants to be with Miss Forbes, who does not care anything about him, and is going off with Ashton, whom you would like to be with, instead of me, and there .... why don't you help me out?" he said, finishing with a rush, after a long halt.

"There, there; why don't you make a longer sentence of your reflection? You certainly don't need any help." "What a noble fellow he is under his peculiarities!" she thought, while she said,—

"I know no one, truly, of all the people here, whom I care more to be with than you."

"Do you mean that?" he said, with an earnestness that quite changed him; and then he forgot the others in a long, pleasant talk with her.

"Come with me to the cliff," Ashton said to Catharine Forbes, when they came together, later on. "The sun will soon go out, and the moon rise, and we can see it all from there."

It was not far, but the way through the sand was heavy, and they were in no hurry.

"Have you been thinking?" he asked.

"Of what?" she said, with her face towards the sand.

"Do you know, I am filled with a strange love for you, that I cannot explain to myself,—a love I have never felt for any human being before,—that makes all other women in the world wearisome to my heart, so that I long, when with them, only to be once more with you, to tell you I love you, come what may? I, who have taught my-

self to weigh my words, my thoughts, my actions, and never to speak unless for a reason, must now tell you this, because I cannot help it. You have said you will not hear; but how can you avoid it?"

"Please don't," she said, faintly.

They were climbing the cliff now, and there was a pause of many minutes.

From the top they could see the group they had left, many of them clustered about a large fire, and others wandering up and down the beach. The disk of the sun was half obscured, and a moment later it disappeared, leaving only a mass of clouds red and brown, nowhere brilliant, but deep and rich in sombre colors. The town, far off, was almost indistinguishable in the dusk, save for the lights that, after a time, began to twinkle there like stars. A great sea-hawk broke the picture, as with long lazy wing he made his way to some far resting-place of the night; a bunch of sand-snipe

flew by, crying shrilly; no breeze stirred, but in the bay they heard, through the sigh of the surf, the sound of a bell-buoy, muffled, yet distinct; and then night had come.

And a man's voice fell upon a woman's listening ears, and she had no strength to refuse to hear, for it was a story sweet to her heart, and he told it well in the soft summer twilight,—oh, so well that in all the days to come, or bright or clouded, it might never, never leave her.

"I don't know what is in store for us in the future," he said. "God knows, I cannot think of it now, but I know when I am away from you I can never forget: as you stand there, looking out at the dull gray sea, you seem a very part of it all. I shall remember you thus, with the sea-wind touching your hair and kissing your eyes and charming your soul with its music. The world to me seems sometimes all false and wrong, and life, however we hope and

pray, will not be as we wish it; but do not make it harder now by saying you do not care to hear me: my heart will not be silent."

"Do you know what you are doing to me by talking thus?" she asked, looking at him with strange fearless eyes lit with the beginning of a woman's passion.

"What is it?"

"This must be all wrong. Love that begins like this cannot be as it seems. There should be in it more than this wildness and sorrow and longing. It is less than three days since we have met, and I feel as near to you as if I had known you well for as many years; and when you talk to me as you do, my heart beats so, and my brain is not my own, for I do not seem to care whether it is all true or false, so long as I can hear it."

How sweet it was to him! Never before had words like these come to his heart, for the girl who said them was young and so in-

nocent that they were almost as the prattle of childhood in their fulness and sincerity.

"My darling sweetheart!" he whispered; but she drew away from him.

"Is it not wrong for you to speak to me so?" she asked. "Don't you know that it is? Tell me." And she was so earnest that he wanted only to take her in his arms and comfort her.

"No, a thousand times no; not if I love you and you love me."

"And what will be the end of it all? Something dreadful, I know; for I am too happy."

"What can come but joy to us? Surely the world is ours, and life is ahead; even if it be a battle, do you not say it is better than sloth?"

The moon rose over the land, and as they turned to look upon it, large and dim in the warm midsummer haze, she placed her hand in his, but spoke no word to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

"AND SO DANCE OUT THE ANSWER."

"I said to my heart, Let us take our fill
Of mirth and pleasure and love and laughter,
For the fates have ever a stronger will,
And life will be never the same life after."

"I CANNOT tell you how much I feel what you have said to me this afternoon. I mean to accomplish something hereafter, in the way of work, that will make me a man and of some use in the world. May I trust in your sympathy and help?"

On a small balcony outside of the ball-room of the Casino, Franklin McAlpin sat with Margaret Lee and spoke to her thus, with a depth of feeling in his voice she had not believed him capable of.

"You know it is what I wish for," she

said, prettily. "As for help, I fear I cannot give you that, for I do not know how."

"But you will know some day, when I tell you of it," he said, earnestly; and they went in, and danced together, and felt as if they had each discovered another friend and a reason for thinking that the world was not quite so bad a place as they had said it was, not long before.

In the ball-room, Harcourt, as he danced in his formal English fashion with Jessie Brooks, leaned to whisper,—

"Don't laugh at a chap, will you? for I cannot stand it from you, you know. I want you to think of me sometimes without laughing; and you know I have something I must tell you before I go away, and I don't tell you right off because you will think I don't mean what I say; but I do, and I must speak of it to you. You will hear me without chaffing, won't you?"

"How sweet he is!" she thought. "I

wish our Americans were as nice;" while she laughed, and said,—

"What can it be you are going to say? Oh, I know; when the time comes, you will tell me you are going away. Won't it be lovely and sad?"

But she gave him a flower from the buds on her breast as they walked home, and he was happy.

The one who enjoyed himself least of all was Harry Brooks, for the widow had him again in her toils. Her golden hair, twined in a princess coil about her head and fastened by a great jewelled pin; her skin, made white and fair; her rose-bud mouth, pretty and insincere, and her pale, flashing eyes, charmed most men; but Brooks did not care for them, nor for her soft, entreating hands that held his so warmly in the dance. She was certainly pretty, and danced easily to his steady steps, yet he could only see one woman in the room, a girl with dull-

black hair and strange eyes, who danced always with another man.

Ashton and Catharine Forbes had gone down from the cliff speaking low words together. A peace had fallen upon them in the twilight and the coming night. What more was there left to be said when she had placed her hands so in his? Only the old, old words, over and over,—no plans, no future, save the wide white beach and the flashing fire ahead of them, with the honey-colored moon hanging in the sky to light their way.

As they lay on the rugs, on the sand, while the others, grouped about, sang songs and told weird tales, they knew only of themselves, and across the fire seemed very far away, for he was speaking to her, and she listened only to his voice. In a corner of the coach together they had ridden home, and now he held her in his arms and they danced down the long hall, with its rows of

people, its bright lights, and the whirling couples, and thought only of each other.

"Oh, how happy I am!" she whispered to him, softly. "Will it be so always, do you think?"

"I pray God it may," he said, speaking close to her, the touch of her hair thrilling him.

"Do you know," she went on, "I have a friend who was married some years ago, and they loved each other, and he had all the money they wanted, and so they went abroad and stayed for over a year. When they came back she told me she had lived a year of perfect happiness,—that there was never a remembrance in all the time save only of joy; and the week after she told me, the man she loved was dead. She has never been the same since, and never will. Do you suppose that God sometimes puts all our happiness together,—as much to some in a day as to others in years? It seems so, doesn't it?"

"Don't talk of sorrow," he said; "please don't. Think of what I told you this morning, and dream that we are together in a boat, drifting down some quiet stream, where the scent of the meadows, sweet with new-mown hay, comes to you, and that the stars come out, one by one, and that I hold you in my arms and whisper to you to love me always. Life is such a little while, to love is so very sweet, and, whether we are heroes or singers or workers, or merely wanderers amid the flowers and brambles, the end is always the same. We go by different pathways, but some day our joys and griefs will seem very small, and we will cast them down with a shudder, before the door-way, on the sunless plain where all who meet stand alike before the warder who looks at us with hollow, beckoning eyes."

"Don't! Don't talk so!" she said. "It is not true; and it hurts me."

And he held her close and thought of

a noble life of toil, where each morning brought with it some duty, made easy because of some one's cheering voice; each night saw something done for himself and the world. He became known of many men, who sought him for his work, and his success was all his own; he had won it in the battle of his faith. And he saw a home where one was waiting, always, to greet him with eyes that were trust and love; soft hands clinging to his own at meeting and parting, always with the warmth of this that he held now; and there were lips that kissed him as man might never be kissed, save only by one, in this life,—long, clinging kisses, as of soul to soul.

There was a crash of the band, and the waltz was over, and Franklin McAlpin, approaching, said,—

"Here is a letter I found with mine to-night. I forgot to give it to you before."

Ashton took it from him, looked at the handwriting, and put it in his pocket.

A moment after, Brooks came up and claimed Catharine Forbes, and Ashton was left alone.

He went out beneath one of the lights at the entrance to the room, opened the letter, and stood there reading it. Two of the written lines burned into his eyes and glowed before him and would not go away:

"You must come for me at Newport, to-morrow, without fail."

CHAPTER IX.

"SO, GOOD-BYE TO YOU."

"Earth's last kiss, and the eyes are strained,
And arms outstretched, for the gloom draws nigh;
But lips have met, and a love is drained,—
Earth's last kiss; dearest love, good-bye."

ASHTON leaned against the wall, in a shadow, on the gallery overlooking the sea. It was moonlight,—so intense and clear that he might have seen far out over the waters, but his eyes were abstracted and anxious, for strange feelings beat at his heart, crying to him to open unto them.

He grasped a letter, and once held it up as if about to dash it into the sea which foamed over the rocks below him; but he stayed his hand and again sank into thought.

"I will write her a note to-night, and then leave by the early train to-morrow," he muttered, and, turning, made his way to the writing-room.

"Darling Kate," he wrote, "to-morrow I must leave you, without saying good-bye." And then, try as he might, he could get no further. He could not find it in his heart to write to her so; what would she say when she read it? Poor child! Oh, God, how he loved her! No; he would go without a word, and then write to her on the morrow or the following day: he could explain matters then more satisfactorily. He would not see or dance with her again, but would return to the house and take his departure in the morning, before she had risen.

But it might not be so, for as he strode along the gallery Catharine Forbes came by, her hand on the colonel's arm.

"Why, where have you been, Morris?

Miss Forbes has just told me that this was your dance with her," the colonel blurted out.

And so it was that, in place of being back at the hotel, Ashton was in the ball-room again with a girl in his arms whom he loved,—a woman the perfume of whose hair, as it rested near his heart, filled his senses with a touch of exaltation he had never known in all his varied life.

She had quickly fallen into his long, easy glide, and now floated in his arms as though a very part of himself. How sweet and warm his breath was on her hair, and how firmly and closely his arm held her! Was there in all this wide world a man like this, —noble and strong,—forcing people to love him? Oh, that they might never part, but go on and on thus together into the vast forever, for all time to come.

"You are as light and soft as a piece of thistle-down," he whispered, as he held her

closely, and a few dishevelled hairs touched his lips.

"You have a beautiful throat and shoulders," he had said to her, once, and so she wore to-night a gown which showed all their beauty, and he thought, now, as he looked at her, that he had never seen as fair. Her skin was dusky white. Her neck rose as a column of marble from the shoulders shapely and unblemished. Her eyes and mouth,—how doubly sweet they were to him, now that he thought of leaving them on the morrow! And, though she knew not of his going, her lips, when she leaned up and whispered to him,—how they begged him to stay and kiss away their doubts! Should he go and leave her now when she had grown to be all to him? Why not face the battle, though the foes outnumbered his forces two to one? Why not break away from all the petty excitements, the vain pursuits, and the always

vanity of the life he led, and with this woman, whom he loved, force the enemy to give him that place the world owed to him?

But what did it matter, since they danced so together, here and there, among the seekers for pleasure, her form in his arms, her face near him, her breath on his cheek, and love for him in her eyes?

The band was playing the strains of "Only Once More," and he thought of the morrow and the good-bye he was to say; and his mind was so torn by doubts that he hardly knew when the waltz was over or how it was they were sitting in a dark alcove of the balcony over the sea.

Did some unconscious throb of her heart foretell her what he was about to say?—for a silence fell on them that neither cared to break.

How warm and soft was the breeze that came in from the ocean, lulling their senses like the fragrance of summer flowers!

But it was winter in Ashton's thoughts, and he was back in town, with invitations from his fashionable friends; and his clubs called to him, and theatre doors stood open; and he thought of himself, tied down by toil in the haste of the world, so that frivolous laughing Gayety, with whom he had lived for so many years, deserted him, and, when she saw him with a pack on his back, sneered and smiled and passed him by. And his heart was weak, and he cursed himself, and his fate, and the ways of the world.

Slowly he turned his eyes and looked upon the girl at his side, and forgot all else save that he loved her and wanted to take her in his arms and whisper all the mad words that trembled on his lips.

"Kathleen,"—how his voice faltered,—"I must go away to-morrow."

Though it was so dark where they sat, he saw her eyes turned up to his with a pain

in them, deep as if he had stricken her flesh with a knife.

"Why?" she whispered, catching her breath.

Now is your time to tell her the truth, Morris Ashton, without concealing anything. Make your peace with her heart. Surely she is enough of a woman to understand, and you may save her so much in time to come.

"I am needed at once in the city, on business."

"Will you come back?"—slowly.

"I fear I cannot, this summer." He leaned closer to her.

What was this wild throbbing of blood through her veins, this suffocation of her heart as if it was weary of beating? She felt faint; a mist was before her, and, as she leaned forward, a ray of moonlight falling upon her face showed Ashton her eyes wet with tears.

"Poor little girl!" he said. "Don't cry." And, drawing her head down upon his breast, he put his arms about her and held her close to his heart.

True, sir or madam, your child would never have acted so—on three days' acquaintance; but then, you see, this girl did not have the advantage of the hot-house education of yours; so she nestled in this strong man's breast, while he kissed her hair again and again and comforted her with words that came very easily from his lips.

"Men must work, sweetheart, and women weep," he said. "But life and hope will come to you again; so do not cry, mavourneen. I will never forget you; and when you wander among the roses of your garden or sit by the fire in winter-time while your soul flies away to this place, think then of one who loves and longs for you and knows your troubles, and who prays that you may be at peace."

Her sobs were changed to sighs, under the persuasion of his voice. Did he not love her, and would not all be well at the end?

"And, then, some day we will come to the land of Neverwas," he went on, "where the soft summer clouds float over seas that are always blue and calm, and you and I will be always together, where no one shall ever part us."

She was almost smiling, as she turned her tear-marred face up to his own, feeling so safe with him thus.

He put her hair back with his hands, and kissed her tenderly upon her white brow, and then upon her eyes, but she turned her head away ere he touched her lips.

"What shall I do when you are gone?" she whispered.

"Think of me always; hope for the future; pray for me even as a man at sea, that I may safely come to the haven where I would be."

"And what will you do when you are gone?" she asked.

"I may not live beyond my destiny," he said. "I will work, and try to follow out your wishes, and write to you and tell you many, many things. And some day I shall come and cry at your door, saying, 'Open to me, my love, my dove, my sweet, my undefiled, for my head is heavy with the dews of night, and my heart is sad.'"

She stirred in his arms, but said no word.

"And then the garden will be filled with flowers, and you and I will walk out in the morning, and there will be a new day begun, and we shall be at peace."

She turned her face to his.

"Kiss me good-bye," he said.

He held her close; his lips were upon hers, and they kissed each other,—a long, sweet kiss, that lingered and left its marks upon their souls for all time.

CHAPTER X.

"TO WHAT END, MY LORD?"

"Unsolved! And so we sadly linger here,
And clasp our hands, and wish that we might pray
Lacking the courage, in the mists of fear
We may not choose. O weary heart, which way?"

ALONE!

Catharine Forbes knew not how the morning passed after he was gone, but the long afternoon she spent on the cliff, in the old place, looking over the ocean, that lay in the heat of the day without a ripple, and only a slow, heavy roll throbbing in its breast, like the beating of a weary heart. She could not read the book she had brought with her. What were tales of life, since her whole being was wrapped up in

her own story, that was all the world to her, now?

She went over in her thoughts every hour of the time which had passed since their meeting. Now he was bending above her with questioning eyes; her hands were in his, while he whispered earnestly, and his breath was warm and sweet, his lips upon her own, and her heart beating so wildly with passionate love for him that she was frightened.

Who was it had spoken that morning of summer flirtations? They could not have thought of him, for surely no man ever kissed a woman as he had done and then forgot. And he—— No! no! come what might, she could never believe him other than what he had been to her; and she kissed again and again the small ring which he had given her, and took out a flower which she had picked up where it had fallen from his coat. How brown and faded

it was, its sweetness all gone! but he had worn it, and that was enough. It seemed to her that the great gull that came swiftly in from the sea might be bearing his soul on its white wings; and when the bird passed over her, so close as almost to touch her, she felt the kisses of invisible lips on her hair and eyes and mouth.

He would write: she was sure of that, for he had told her so. When would she get a letter? Perhaps to-morrow, or, at the latest, the next day. How would he begin, and what would he say? Oh, how she longed for a word!

Back to the hotel, in the hazy evening light, along the hard beach, where the sandpipers flew before her with faint, childish cries of fear!

Two days had passed, and still no letter came. Some of the laughter in her heart was gone.

Brooks, now that Ashton was away, fol-

lowed her about with a quiet devotion which touched her. There was no wish of hers which he did not anticipate. Then, too, she felt so secure in his care, no matter where they might be. She was with him at the Casino, soon after Ashton's departure, and a man, Bob Knight, from Philadelphia, with a fine head and a weak brain, coming out on the balcony after a dinner-party staggered up against her drunkenly. Brooks caught him by the collar and lifted him off on to the lawn lightly as if he had been a child, and passed on with a laughing remark; but he said to her, next morning,—

"I hate to have you go down to that place in the evenings; there is always a chance of that sort of thing happening, and I don't think any one is better for coming in contact with it; you of all persons in the world I would guard from it."

The third day, and no letter.

She looked so anxiously for the mail in the morning.

Three letters for her. She glanced at the address of the topmost,—from an old school-friend. She lingered before she turned to the others, with a pain and hope in her heart that made her feel as if it might stop beating.

No letter.

She spent the morning in her room, pleading a headache; but in the afternoon she had a longing, which could not be resisted, to go out to the cliff, where she might watch the sails far away over the sea and talk only to the grass and be alone with her heart.

She thought to avoid any one joining her, by taking a back way, so that she need not pass the hotels and the Casino; but chance had it that she met Brooks ere she had reached the outskirts of the town.

"So," he said, laughing, "this is the way

you try to escape, is it? Where are you going?—if I may ask."

"My head aches, and I thought the sea air would do it good. I am going down to the beach."

As he looked at her, he saw that her face was pale and weary, and his heart was full of sorrow.

"Let me come with you," he said. "I will not trouble you, or talk if you do not wish it; only let me come."

Had he only known but a little of the wild desire to be alone that beat at her heart, he would not have asked her; better, perhaps, that he had turned away for the moment; but absence is the last thing a man who loves can endure; maybe this is a reason why it is the last thing he sees is wanted.

"Oh, if Henry had not come!" she thought. "I cannot talk to him now; I want to be by myself." But she could not

tell him so, without betraying her secret: so she vainly tried to appear interested in what he was saying.

He seemed to feel that something troubled her, and his voice was low and sympathetic. He spoke of a vacation,—the last he had spent at her mother's place,—and then strayed dangerously near the old story. She longed to cry out to him, "Oh, do not speak! I cannot bear it!" His words were tiresome to her at first, but as he went on, with trembling voice, she knew, even with the love of another man in her heart, how much she must refuse in what was now being offered her. She remembered it all so well in after-years. And who can say he was foolish for speaking? Love has its own times and places, and may not be gainsaid.

"I love you so well," he went on, "that since you said you did not care for me I have really tried hard to find some one else

whom I could love." It did not seem laughable as he said it; it was the effort of honesty to her as well as to himself. "But no one in all this world has your hands, your eyes, and your lips."

Truly, this was not the Henry of old, who had halted over his stammering words. Love had taught him of her language, and Catharine was compelled to listen, with a certain quietness coming over her heart.

"Who is there who, knowing us, would not call me a fool, to tell you this again, after the way you have treated me? Not that you have been unkind, but because you have shown me in so many ways that you do not care for me. Yet I tell you, if ten years had passed, instead of two, and a thousand more obstacles stood in my way than there are now, I should not give you up. My feeling of respect to myself you might think would keep me silent; but no! I have never loved any one but you, I

love you now, and I shall always love you, and some day you will care for me."

His eyes flashed so she dared not look at him, and there was a will in his voice that possessed her heart. She could not tell what it meant: she was almost frightened. Her eyes fell upon a little, old-fashioned ring upon her hand, and in an instant she was filled with a feeling of shame that she should be listening to words like these. She sought a most effective refuge as she said, with an accent almost of derision, that made his heart burn with a desire to hold her with strong arms and compel her to hear more,—

"Come, let us go back, it is growing late."

* * * * * *

Five days, and still no sign or word; and then it was a week which had passed, and she knew not what she thought. She must be true in her thoughts of him, come what might.

One afternoon, before dinner, she came down from her room. Still no letter. She joined a group on the piazza who were opening their mail. Presently Margaret Lee, looking hard at her, said,—

"Why, here is something that will please you all, and you particularly, Katie dear."

There were many calls upon her to tell what it was.

"Why, Bessie Ingram writes to me of her engagement to Mr. Ashton. He only formally proposed two days ago, but they have really had an understanding for some time, and so they want it announced at once."

There was the usual excited talk, in which all the girls, save one, joined.

"He hasn't a cent to his name." "He always was on the lookout for rich girls." "Yes, and such a handsome fellow." "He was so sweet and polite." "Do you know he was a winner among women, too? They

say he has kissed more girls than any other man about." "He kissed Maud Alden the first night he met her; and she is no fool, either." And so on.

Catharine Forbes was sick and giddy. There was such a suffocation at her heart and her brain that she could think of nothing save the possibility of Jessie Brooks falling backward off the railing; but she recovered herself in an instant, as she caught the bright eyes of Miss Lee and saw a sneer on her face. With an effort she forced herself to a seat and laughed, a strange little laugh.

"I knew from what he told me," she said, "that we should hear something of the kind soon." She did not, indeed, see the irony of her speech.

Then dinner was announced. Her mother handed her a letter she had taken from the box, before Catharine had come down. It was from Ashton. Carelessly she thrust it

in her belt. Fortunately, she sat at a table apart from the others, and managed to get through the meal without attracting attention, though she ate nothing.

Only to get away from everybody! Oh for the silence of the sea again! How, she did not know, but she was once more there, and the sun was going down.

Back at the old place!

She took out her letter: she had not dared to read it before. There was no address or signature, but only these lines written in firm, small letters:

"For you, remember always, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things.

"As for me, I have broken the faith; I have fled from the fight; for the rest——"

She stood with her face turned towards the glory of the sunset. The sky was a mass of crimson, purple, and gold, and the sun sent forth a thousand rays that flashed up into the heavens like some fantastic display of northern lights.

She did not see the splendor of it all, for her heart was cold, and there crept through her veins a great throb of weariness like that of one who is losing consciousness. Her eyes, that had been so dry, now drooped languid and sorrowful, and presently filled with great burning tears that would have their way. It seemed to her poor, childish heart that the world was some great limitless prairie on which she stood alone, and as far as her eyes might see there was naught but waste and silence and hopelessness. The night, filled with evil shapes, was closing down over all; there was no sun, and no east or west,—only darkness everywhere.

She was so much a child that she had no reason at her command for guidance. It was all so new to her, so undreamt of before; and she cried so earnestly, in a faint voice under her breath, "Oh, do come back! Don't go away and leave me forever!" and then, in childish command, "Come back to me! Come back to me, I tell you; come back to me!"

But it was only the sea that whispered in reply, as it softly fell upon the sand, "Never again. Never again."

The deep tones that had grown so familiar to her, and to which she had listened as to the voice of a prophet in a new land, the lazy eyes whose light had burned a pathway into the inner temple of her soul, the clasp of his arms, the kisses that had waked her to such new, strange depth of feeling,—these would not come back at her calling. And it seemed to her not days but centuries since she had known him. It was not the shallow

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

sorrow of disappointment or girlish bitterness of heart that marred her soul,—only the feeling that life was over for her forever.

She threw herself in the long grass and sobbed away her soul. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Did Christ utter the words with the last throb of the great human heart which beat in his bosom? His cry has echoed down the ages to be the ultimate prayer of his followers in the extremity of their sorrow and need.

Never again the same.

A child lay dying in the tall grass on the cliff, and great sobs shook the tired body. It was only such a trifling thing, it is true, that had hurt her. There had been no desperado, with heart filled with robbery or hate, to stab her or grasp her white throat with cruel fingers. It was only a friend who had failed her. Oh, if it had only been you or me, we should have known; we should not have allowed such a

small matter to affect us; but, you see, this poor child was ignorant and weak, and it hurt her, and she did not know of any cure for her sorrow.

Sobs and cries, while the evening fell drearily, and then great gasps as if her heart was being strangled; then—then—the blades of grass about the body rustled a little, and all was still.

A child had passed away out of the tall grass over the limitless ocean and into the blackness of night. The simplicity, the tenderness, the childish eyes so frank and open, the little clinging, baby ways, the laughter without conceit, the sweetness, so deep, so beyond all things else beautiful in this world,—all were gone; the child was dead.

And when night had fully come, a woman passed down the pathway, with her gown clinging damply about her. She walked slowly, but with a firm and deliberate tread,

and passed up the beach towards the lights of the town. One would have thought she would have hurried from the blackness and loneliness of the beach towards the gay lights, for the sound of music drifted over to her ears: the band was playing "Life and Love" for the waltzers. Perhaps she did not care for the brightness, for once she stopped and turned and looked out to the sea. Did the mystery ahead seem greater than that she was leaving? Had she conquered the problem of the night and the darkness,—the reason of the sorrows? Did she long to leave it all for the rest in the arms of the soft sea that murmured so lovingly to her? or was she too weary and broken to know or care which was better? Presently she turned and went on her way towards the town.

When she reached the lights there was in her eyes the appealing look of an animal hunted to the death,—no sign of girlhood

about her,—and the face that shone so white and sad was the face of a woman.

She could not have life as she wished; she had taken up the burden of living, for she might not desert, and she had entered upon a battle-field where all must meet who are not cowards,—a field where one cannot know friend from foe, so like are they at times, and where there are no armies, but only battles between the few, that never, never end, for the recruits are many.

Never again the same!

The night might pass, and the dreary shadows, that mocked about and affrighted her soul, flee away with the mists of the sea at the breaking of day. She might stand in the radiance and a thousand beams and colors of the dawn light the world about her, in which she might seem to be only in sunlight and joy, her face lit with the soft sweetness of a new morning. She might sit by a fireside of her own, where,

in the flickering light, she should hear true words of love, and feel a baby's head against her own, and baby hands clutching at her breasts, and she might dream she was at peace. But the old bitter pain would not leave her heart; the world would never be the same; she would forever be thinking of the right and the wrong of it all,—why life should be so. The weary, hurt look that will never go out of her eyes has been born in the night of the limitless sorrow of love.

THE END.

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